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for the act of educating necessarily implies inequality between teacher and pupil. The human necessity for companionship gives rise to societies of different kinds, in which we may, perhaps, say that there is some approach to educating their members, the necessary inequality being supplied by various grades and orders. They presuppose education in the usual sense of the word, but they wish to bring about an education in a higher sense, and, therefore, they veil the last form of their ideal in mystery and secrecy.

By the term *Philister* the Germans indicate the man of a civilized state who lives on, contented with himself and devoid of any impulse towards further self-culture. To one who is always aspiring after an Ideal, such a one cannot but be repulsive. But how many are they who do not, sooner or later, in mature life, crystallize, as it were, so that any active life, any new progress, is to them impossible?

## FICHTE'S CRITICISM OF SCHELLING.

[TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF J. G. FICHTE.]

BY A. E. KROEGER.

### *II. Concerning the Fate Hitherto Experienced by the Science of Knowledge.*

1. *Description of the state of our Literature generally.* — It is by no means our purpose here to repeat how the public has conducted itself towards the Science of Knowledge ever since its first appearance, but to explain this conduct and to show up its grounds; and since these grounds lie, doubtless, in the state of our literature generally, as it has existed and still exists, we shall best give the proposed information by first furnishing a thorough description of this state of our general literature.

The pain and deep sorrow which overcomes us at being forced to leave the pure ether of profound thought, wherein

we would gladly dwell always, and to descend into the abyss of intellectual and moral error, it is not necessary to describe. Surely it is not inclination which leads us to this business; we have to overcome a deep repugnance in resolving to undertake it; and this resolve we have formed, not because we think our work will really help the matter, but because it is our duty to act, as if it might possibly be of use in it, and because it is at any rate necessary that the whole evil should be shown up in all its loathsomeness, so that a wholesome terror may strike the public. Nay, even though it were true that there is no help for the present generation, and that this age must be abandoned as beyond salvation, it would still be necessary to raise up this terror for the new up-growing generation, that it may not follow the footsteps of its predecessors.

I have only two general remarks to premise:

*Firstly.* Whether that which I shall designate as the character of our learned public is valid for all of its members without exception, or only for the great majority of them, may be left undetermined; and I will cheerfully admit the latter to those of my scientific readers who are conscious of never having uttered, in speech or writing, such statements as I shall hereafter cite—for it certainly is not pleasant for me to imagine the number of the guilty ones larger than it is. My remarks refer only to those who—after a severe self-examination—feel themselves referred to.

*Secondly.* The general reply to such reproaches as ours is this: “You have exaggerated the matter, or spoken altogether untruthfully; we are not as you describe us to be.” The ground of this their mistake—which ground, however, generally remains concealed to them—is this: in all their utterances they only say what has been said; and this their saying again of sayings never allows them to get to say the subject-matter itself. Now, they cannot but believe that we do things in the same way. They believe that we are desirous of reporting their speech, of saying what they say; and thus, of course, it happens that, in our characteristics of them, they do not discover their own sayings, and hence conclude that they

are shamefully traduced. But our desire was rather to say what they *really* and in truth *are* and *live*. (Thus their *life* can be shown up very well by what they *are*; for, whether they know it or not, their life is the source and premise of their being.) Hence, if it should happen that, in trying to explain also in words this their life and being, they say the very reverse of what we assert them to be, the explanation is as follows: that which they thus say of themselves is not an expression of their true being, but rather a speech committed to memory, a mask bought in market, wherewith they badly enough conceal their natural skin.

And now to our business. That the organ for speculative philosophy, which alone makes clear, puts in order, and furnishes the ground for all other knowledge, and without which all meddling with the sciences is only a blind, accidental groping—that this organ, I say, is utterly wanting in the present cultivators of science, has already been shown in our former remarks, and has been proved by the fate of our own speculation, to the satisfaction of any one who is able to understand us. Now, it would not be so much of a reproach for our present age to share the lack of this organ with all former ages, did not this great distinction arise: that those previous ages never heard a word of true speculation, whilst, during the last twenty-five years, two different authors, using each an utterly independent style and method, have in a continuous series of writings placed before the public the rules of true speculation, and exemplified them on various subjects.

But what shall I say, when it is as clear as sunlight that amongst all these cultivators of science even the conception of the science itself, in its purely formal and external qualities, has almost vanished—nay, that they internally tremble at this conception, and passionately oppose the slightest attempt made to awaken its memory, and that the only consolation of their life is the hope that a science will never be realized, and the only object of their endeavors is to prevent its realization. Would not this consideration lead us to imagine that in the place of an experienced, learned public we have now to deal

with violent enemies of science, who hold up the mask of learnedness only in order to be the more secure and victorious in their attacks upon science?

Science, as sure as it is science, has an absolute and unchangeable evidence in itself, absolutely annihilating all doubt and all possibility of a doubt in it; and, since this evidence can be possible only in one unchangeable manner, it results that science has its firm, unchangeable, external form. This belongs to the essence of science, as such; only on this condition is it science; and thus it has always been held and believed wherever a scientific public has had existence. But what do our pretended men of learning hold in respect to this point? How many may there be amongst them who have not at one time or another allowed expressions like these to escape their lips: "Somebody considers himself alone wise and a philosopher;" "Somebody wants Philosophy to be a complete whole;" "It is necessary in meeting the objections of opponents to place one's self on their stand-point;" (as if there could be more than one stand-point for each truth!) "In investigating truth one ought not to be so very strict, but ought to live and let live," etc., by all of which expressions the Science of Knowledge is asked to abandon its absolute, fundamental character? All these expressions are uttered by them, moreover, as axioms which no sensible man can doubt, with a childish *naïveté*, and so utterly without a presentiment of their own absurdity that there is no doubt they expect not only the approval of all other men, but are even convinced that the scientific man, whom they accuse of arrogating to himself alone wisdom and philosophy, has never considered the matter in the light of these their axioms, and that now, since they have reminded him, he cannot help seeing it and being thoroughly ashamed of himself. Now, supposing these same authors and learned men should at some other time, in speaking of the nature of science, express themselves very much as we have done above; would this be considered their earnest meaning? How could it? They would only *say* it, but *believe* the contrary; for, in judging present facts, they always act by the contrary — and some of them even exemplify this by adding to

such merely *said* confessions with a touching *naïveté*, “ This is certainly true *in the abstract*, but by no means *in the concrete*; ” whereby they, indeed, clearly confess that they hold the above conception of a science to be only the empty conception of a clownish and playful thinking, which will never, they trust, become earnest.

The inner essence of science is grounded upon itself, and makes itself absolutely through itself, and out of itself, as it makes itself; it absolutely annihilates all arbitrariness, and the very first requisite of a scientific man is this: that all inclinations in him should submit to the holy law of truth, and that he should be forever resolved to submit in quiet resignation to whatever shall force itself upon him as the truth. Can we believe that this condition has been complied with—or, merely, that they consider it possible that anybody should require it of them—by men who seriously tell us, in the presence of the whole public, that our truth does not please them, who begin to describe their feelings when they are requested to accept it, and who then sketch out the features of a truth which would please them, requesting us to alter our truth in conformity to these sketches of theirs; and who, when we refuse, get mad and passionate, and complain that we want to tear their hearts out of their bodies—which, indeed, we gladly would do if we knew how, but in this our inability leave the matter to Divine Grace? Or shall we believe that this condition has been complied with by those who, independently of the content of our doctrine, complain that the form is not sweet enough, who require us to teach them kindly, and who want to know why we have applied to them such rough shakes, which have nearly disturbed the placid serenity of their dear souls, and who request us to improve and to sugar-coat our medicine in future, since, otherwise, they are resolved (as a well-deserved punishment for us) not to be taught by our teachings. And yet it is not possible to believe that there are many exceptions to this mode of thinking, when we see how our new doctrine is opposed by no other weapons than those of disinclination, and those of a desire to create that same feeling in the breasts of readers, whose sympathy

and equal ignorance are expected, and of expressed surprise that this new doctrine should be so immensely at variance with common opinion — as if one ought to accept something as true because it is the common opinion !

The very first knowledge which is to be required of the man of science is this : that science is not a mere play and pastime, not a luxury to heighten the delights of life, but something to be demanded of all mankind, and the only possible source of all its further development ; that truth is a blessing and the highest of all blessings, involving all other blessings ; whilst error is the source of all evil, is sin, and the source of all other sins and vices ; and that the man who checks truth and helps to propagate error commits the most grievous sin against the whole human race. Can this knowledge be supposed to exist in those who, throughout their whole lives and throughout all their writings and works, have evinced, and do evince, the most absolute indifference in regard to truth and error ; who continue every day of their lives to teach without ever *knowing* anything ; who, without the conviction that what they teach is truth, nevertheless continue to teach it, on the chance that they may have hit the truth, and who thus, having inwardly become one concrete hypocrisy and lie, yet continue to live on lying, and to eat, drink, and clothe themselves with lies ? I say without conviction, for it is a truth of heavenly clearness, which of itself alone secures to mankind the possession of truth, and which, although it discovers the corruption of those men, and is, therefore, hateful in their sight, cannot be given up ; this truth, namely, that Evidence carries along with it a specifically different inner and convincing power, which can never be on the side of error ; that every one can, therefore, know, under all circumstances of his life, whether his thoughts take hold of him with that power or not, and that, hence, every one, of whom it appears afterwards that he has been in error, must have known, at least — though he may not have recognized his error as error — that it did not take hold of him with the power of truth ; and that, hence, he might have known at first, if he had but considered maturely, that he did not recognize it as truth. Hence he can escape in no way the

proof that he has acted recklessly and without due respect of truth.

What can possibly be the source of this culpable recklessness? Only laziness, negligence, egotism, and deep moral corruption. Life everlastingly tears us out of ourselves and drives us hither or thither as it chooses, playing with us according to its caprice. To gather one's self together in opposition to this tendency, and thus to hold one's self until the end, costs exertion, self-denial, labor; and this hurts our tender flesh. It is already something, to but take hold of one's self thus at times; but, in order to attain the highest place in the highest of all sciences — speculation — it is necessary that this absolute self-control should have been practiced until it has become a complete art, and until it has become impossible ever to be hurried along by the current of blind imagination; and to get so far requires, again, a clear, sober, and considerate mode of living. How could the impotency of our present days, indeed, suffer such a state of things to come to pass?

But, even if it had been in their power to acquire this art, would they have had the will to acquire it; and would they have accounted this power to collect themselves their honor, or their disgrace? I say, their disgrace! For it is a long time since the rivalry with that nation<sup>1</sup> — which now so cruelly punishes us for our good intention and our inability to rival it — has made the very appearance of German earnestness, thoroughness, and diligence contemptible in our eyes, and has induced us to make a play of scientific pursuits, giving ourselves up wholly to the current of the notions that may strike us, as the only thing which is likely to make us appear in possession of the envied “ease of manner” of that nation. In order to be safe against appearing like pedants, we have become literary snobs, and have not succeeded even in that to any extent. I should like to make inquiry, particularly amongst our younger literary men, how many would rather have it said of them that truth came to them by a happy disposition of their nature, without much trouble or exertion, than that they found

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<sup>1</sup> The French translation.



truth through diligence and earnest thought? How many of them would consider themselves more honored by the title of "a genius" than by being called industrious and careful thinkers? How many of them would not rather consider the latter epithet as disgrace to them, as signifying that they were rather limited and untalented minds, for which nature had done nothing at all! Thus their dreaminess and floating upon the current of self-arisen notions, which is so comfortable, has proved at the same time to be an honor; and, hence, we take more delight in it than in troublesome earnestness.

Now, why could not those men, who, as it has appeared in immeasurable clearness, did know so altogether nothing of science that even the conception of that science and the very first conditions of its acquirement were unknown to them — why could not those men, I say, have stopped pretending to be men of science, and have refrained from writing, teaching, and judging as if they were the most thorough scholars. Moreover, since the only possible motives of action, love of truth and of science, of which they never had a spark in them, could not have impelled them, they could have been so impelled only by such external motives as: wishing to pass for authorities, love of glory, and of other emoluments which are usually connected therewith. Sure enough, they *are* driven and inspired by these motives to such an extent that they hate and fear the real science, which they correctly prophesy will result in the loss of their own reputation, more than anything else, and that no means are too bad for them, by applying which they may hope to check the breaking of light at least so long as they live — live in a shameless battle for an existence a thousandfold forfeited by them, and which they themselves would curse if they had but a spark of honor in their breasts.

By this, their stupid self-conceit, therefore, are they so blinded and possessed that it leads them to the most ridiculous and incredible absurdities. While they always presuppose that no one is quite correct, and that a sure and absolute truth can nowhere be found, they yet forget this principle so utterly when it is to be applied to their own persons that all their arguments are based on the very opposite

principle, and that all their arguments presuppose the following : why, we who speak have undoubtedly the true truth inborn in us, and, hence, the man who contradicts us must necessarily be in the wrong — never considering that the man who contradicts them may take advantage of the same privilege of blind self-conceit for his own assertions. Nay, it has even been known to occur, and is still known to occur every day, that a man imagines himself to have stamped a doctrine with the infallible seal of condemnation by asserting that he cannot understand it, or that it seems so difficult to him as to make his head swim ; thus presupposing with truly childish *naïveté* that the whole world has the same exquisite opinion of himself which he cherishes, and that the whole world places that opinion as an absolute axiom higher than all its own judgments, and never reflecting, in the intoxication of his self-conceit, what would be the proper answer for him.

It is true the present description of the literary condition of our times has been drawn chiefly with a view to explain from it the fate which the Science of Knowledge has met hitherto ; but the times wherein I draw it will, perhaps, exonerate me, when I remark, at the same time, that the political condition<sup>2</sup> of our age, by which it seems, unless a miracle brings salvation in an unforeseeable manner, that all the culture and products of culture which mankind has attained in thousands of years must be doomed to destruction, until, after other thousands of years, savages and barbarians now unknown shall again begin the same path of civilization ; that this political condition, I say, has solely arisen from the condition of our literature. It has been coming upon us as a result of the general inability to take firmly hold of any one object, and to penetrate it in its true essence, and to *will* the remedy against this inability wholly and earnestly, without at the same time willing its opposite, and to carry it out with stern consequence, leaving aside all minor objects. But from whom, indeed, could the men who have decided our fate have learned this firmness, when the men in whose schools they were first taught, and

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<sup>2</sup> The following passage refers to Napoleon's conquest of Germany.

from whom they still daily seek entertainment — though, perhaps, merely for the joke of the thing — give them no other example than that of utter dissoluteness? Wherever there is a literature, the literary men form their age, and, if they get rotten, everything else around rots only so much the more.

But, to return to our proper subject, how was it possible to make these men, who were yet in doubt concerning the first alphabet of all instruction, namely, whether science was at all possible, believe that a Science of Science was possible; or how could one have led these men, who were not at all capable of collecting their thoughts, and who boast of not being so, to the very highest and completest thinking? Nothing was to be expected but what really did result, namely, that they would turn the words and forms of this science into jokes for the amusement of their readers, and, if its author remained serious, heap abuse and anger upon him.

Two remarks in conclusion. If those who are hurt by this description should again utter their minds on the subject, they will most certainly repeat what they always say — that I have exaggerated and stated untruths. Not for their sake, but for the sake of a better future generation — if such a thing be possible — I now state that everything I have said rests on the announced axiom that each one who is afterwards discovered to have been in error might well have known at first that he was not convinced, and that he, therefore, cannot deny having acted recklessly and immorally. But that these men are in error in almost all of their assertions, a better future generation — had the possibility of such a better one not been so well provided against — would soon discover.

Next they will repeat what they also say every time, that I only wish to vent my passion; and for this assertion they will also find a plausible ground in the fact that they have not blessed me with their approval and laudations. Now, we have not kept from them that, so long as they are what they are, we heartily despise, not only them, but also their approval; but they are firmly convinced that it is altogether impossible that any man should not entertain the same admiring opinion of them which they cherish themselves. They will, therefore,

never put faith in this assurance of ours, but will hold it to be an empty pretext and a mask to hide something else. They will, therefore, not believe us again now, though we renew that assurance, and would like to have them take note that, in order to make one's approval an honor, one should first be honorable; and that we would thankfully accept their approval after they had first merited ours, but that until then we should consider it a great disgrace and a proof of badness on our own part if we did please them.